

From a photograph of an old portrait

DR. THOMAS H. CHIVERS OF OAKY GROVE, GEORGIA

THE POE-CHIVERS PAPERS

THE FIRST AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT OF ONE OF POE'S
MOST INTERESTING FRIENDSHIPS

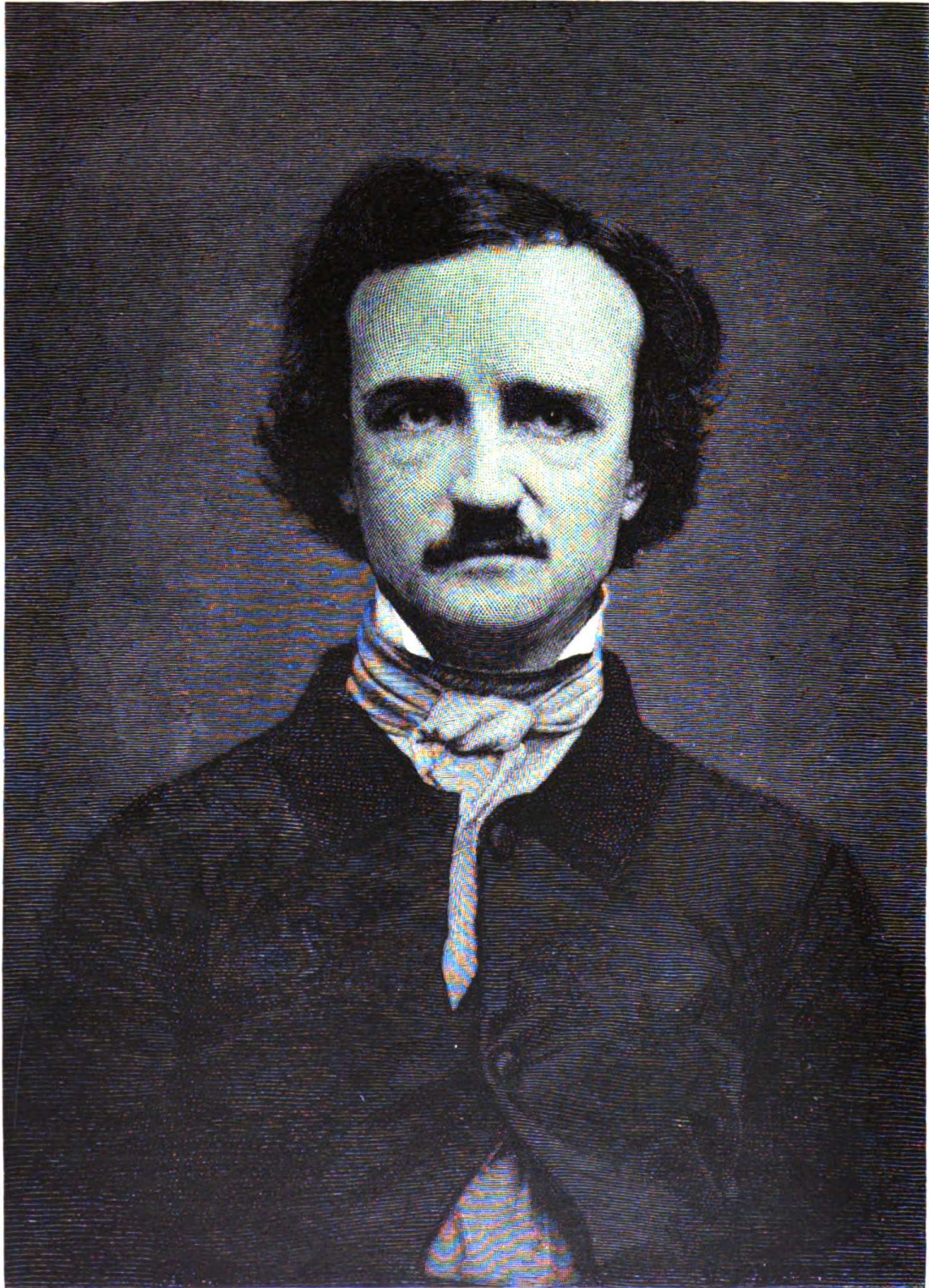
EDITED BY GEORGE E. WOODBERRY

THE renaissance of Chivers is one of the latest incidents of the Poe legend, which puts forth such curious growths from decade to decade. His fame still lingered here in the seventies, but only as a burlesque survival. At that time Bayard Taylor diverted himself with it in the "Echo Club," recalling what is likely to prove his most immortal stanza:

Many mellow Cydonian suckets,
Sweet apples, anthosmal, divine,
From the ruby-rimmed beryline buckets
Star-gemmed, lily-shaped, hyaline;

Like the sweet golden goblet found growing
On the wild emerald cucumber-tree,
Rich, brilliant, like chrysoprase glowing
Was my beautiful Rosalie Lee.

Swinburne was known, among American friends, to exercise the divine right of inextinguishable laughter over such verses, scores of which he would repeat. The British Museum was fabled to have a complete set of Chivers, which seemed to clench the singularity of the poet, inasmuch as hardly any of his countrymen possessed even a single volume of his works. Col-



From a daguerreotype. Engraved on wood by T. Cole. Reprinted from "The Century" for May, 1880

EDGAR ALLAN POE

lectors found them impossible to buy. Their titles were the most preservative part of them. "Eonchs of Ruby," in particular, was itself antiseptic against time. It fascinated the mind it alarmed, and was eagerly but vainly sought. A few stanzas and lines might be heard quoted in literary small talk; and persons of long memory or deep delvers in our Lilliputian history recalled the fact that Chivers and the friends of Chivers stoutly asserted that he was the original owner from whom Poe stole "The Raven"; but the thief, if theft there were, seemed in this case to have got safe off with the spoil. Mr. Benton, however, strikes beside the mark in saying, "The breadth of his territory of renown among scholars is indicated by the fact that Professor Gierlow, a Danish author, wrote a beautiful poem" on his death. Gierlow was a teacher of language in a school at Macon, Georgia.

Things stood at this pass, with Chivers there in the British Museum, at the last bubble of Lethe, when there came a change, and his name began to brighten and grow frequent again. The fame of Poe had magnetized it, and it gave out new radiant energy. Fresh editions of his rare volumes may now fairly be expected. The late W. M. Griswold, in his edition of his father's correspondence, drew Chivers back from oblivion with a brief account, a letter to Poe, and a kindly word for his character. Joel Benton followed with a little sheaf of articles, "In the Poe Circle," and resuscitated the controversy as to who originated "The Raven"; incidentally he reprinted Chivers's more extraordinary poems, and gave some from manuscript that had never seen light before.

Professor Harrison, in his new edition of Poe, comes last. He publishes from the Griswold papers nearly all of Chivers's letters to Poe, and in an appendix he examines Chivers's claims to be the precursor of Poe and decides with much absoluteness that Poe was the precursor of Chivers. These letters were in the hands of the

present writer when he edited the Griswold papers for this magazine, but in the absence of Poe's answers it seemed needless to give them at that time. The latter have now come to light, together with companion papers, having survived Sherman's march to the sea and other vicissitudes of the last half-century in their nook in Georgia; they afford further illustration of Poe's character and career, and they also allow us to reconstruct somewhat more vividly the interesting figure of Chivers himself.

Dr. Thomas Holley Chivers was born in Wilkes County, Georgia, at Digby Manor, near Washington, in 1807,¹ the eldest of seven children. His father, Robert Chivers, was a cotton-planter, rich in lands and slaves. His grandfather, Thomas H. Chivers, had emigrated from England in the middle of the seventeenth century and settled in Virginia, but afterward removed to Georgia. His mother, whose name was Digby, was of similar emigrant stock, her father having come from England and settled in Pennsylvania before finally transferring the family to Georgia, where she married the poet's father in 1806. He was religiously brought up, all the family being Baptists; and, as appears from his verses, his childhood was happy, his domestic affections were warm and tender, and his love for his mother was devotional. He began to write verse early, and with some mastery of metrical form, to judge by the stanzas entitled "Faith," which belong to his twentieth year, and which he afterward described as "showing that the two angels, Love and Adoration, were the twin Sisters who went hand in hand with him through the Eden of his youth, gathering the purple Violets of Heaven." He adopted medicine as a profession and studied at the Transylvania University, where he took the doctor's degree. He was, however, by his father's kindness, independent of the necessity to practise, and he gave himself up to literary and especially poetical pursuits; later in life he was offered a chair of physi-

¹ Professor Harrison corrects this date as follows:

"On page 90 of this volume (1837) he addresses a poem 'To my Precious Mother, on the anniversary of my Twenty-fifth Year,' and subscribes it, 'Written at Philadelphia, October 18, 1834.'" The copy of the volume before the writer has a different poem on page 90. On page

89 there is a poem entitled "To my Mother" simply, and no date is subscribed. The phrase "To my Precious Mother" occurs in the dedication. Professor Harrison's copy may belong to a different issue or have manuscript notes. In every case the year 1807 is the accepted family date, and occurs in a sketch of Chivers written apparently by himself late in life.

ology in the university at Atlanta, which he declined, and this was his nearest approach to a medical or scientific career.

While at the university he had continued to write verse, such as "Georgia Waters," and in 1834 he published a tragedy, "Conrad and Eudora," at Philadelphia; he contributed the next year to the "Southern Literary Messenger" while Poe was editor; and in 1837 he issued his first collection of verse, "Nacoochee; or, The Beautiful Star, with Other Poems," at New York. He spent much of his time at the North in these years, where he had a circle of relatives and friends, and to the end of his life he made long visits there and established connection with writers and scholars of distinction. It is interesting to record also that he was a painter as well as a poet, and that he added to his income as well as his versatility by inventing a machine for unwinding the fiber from silk cocoons.

It was "Nacoochee," the volume of lyrics, which first attracted Poe's public attention to Chivers; but at the age of thirty, when this appeared, Chivers had not developed those characteristics which constitute his originality. The ordinary critic would have found in the verses the metrical form of Moore and Coleridge, and perhaps little else at that time; now other qualities would be more apparent. Though there is no reason to believe that he ever read the poetry of Blake, the Blakeish suggestion in his imagination and diction is occasionally startling; partly because he deals with scriptural allusion and the material imagery of the Bible, his mind having been fed on them, but also because of some similarity in his irregular force of conception and grandiloquent method. In the "Ode to the Mississippi" there are three lines that will serve as an illustration, describing the rivers flowing down to the great "Father of Waters":

Like soldiers enlisted for Freedom to fight!
Who started their marching ere Adam was
born,
And never shall stop till Eternity's morn.

In the last stanza, too, there is a touch of the same quality and tone:

We look on thy bosom, but cannot control
The terror that strikes from the heart to the
soul!

We know thee unique in the East or the West,
Who look'st in a calm like a lion at rest!
We give thee the praise—then adieu to the wild
That brought forth a son called Eternity's
child.

It is also a noticeable matter now that the new poet must have fed on that Philadelphia reprint of Galignani's edition of Keats, Shelley, and Coleridge in one large volume which first brought the immortal romantic fire to our coast and was for our grandfathers a great altar of the Muse. It was a distinction for a new poet in 1837 to quote "Alastor" and "Rosalind and Helen"; and, in fact, Chivers was one of the first of Americans to be "Shelley-mad." The enthusiasm did not mount to his poetry, but it filled the man. Still a third trait worth pointing out is the fact, disclosed by the preface, that he had the Orphic conception of the nature of poetry and the poet's rôle, though he had not yet reached that Orphic egotism which was to belong to him later. Evidently he had the sensibilities and intuitions that denote the poetic temperament, and he possessed instincts of meter and imagery. It is natural to find him soon that rare thing, a Southern transcendentalist, and soon also a Swedenborgian, and even an "associationist" at a later time. The son of a Southern slaveholder, a devotee of Shelley, a friend of Bostonian vagaries, Chivers had fallen on unlucky times; and as he grew older the unregulated elements in him gradually became most marked, till at last he became, not to speak it profanely, a kind of Southern Alcott. The story of his dealings with Poe is the thing of interest in his history, and it may now be completely told.

In the summer of 1840 Poe was endeavoring to start the "Penn Magazine" in Philadelphia, and Chivers was among those whose support he sought as a writer for magazines and as a collector of subscriptions. Chivers acknowledged the receipt of the "Prospectus" and letter accompanying it, August 27, 1840, and promised his aid, but he found room to remonstrate against Poe's "tomahawk" criticism and to advise a milder method. The "Penn Magazine" was abandoned, and the project lay quiescent during Poe's editorship of "Graham's." Chivers appears next to have heard from Poe by an example of that "tomahawk" style, which he had deprecated, applied to himself. In

the article "Autography," in "Graham's" for December, 1841, Poe described Chivers in few lines:

"Dr. Thomas Holley Chivers, of New York, is at the same time one of the best and one of the worst poets in America. His productions affect one as a wild dream—strange, incongruous, full of images of more than arabesque monstrosity, and snatches of sweet unsustained song. Even his worst nonsense (and some of it is horrible) has an indefinite charm of sentiment and melody. We can never be sure that there is *any* meaning in his words—neither is there any meaning in many of our finest musical airs—but the effect is very similar in both. His figures of speech are metaphor run mad, and his grammar is often none at all. Yet there are as fine individual passages to be found in the poems of Dr. Chivers as in those of any poet whatsoever."

Chivers wrote in remonstrance against this, and a second time; and Poe replied, June 6, 1842, acknowledging the three unanswered letters and apologizing for the "Autography" squib:

"I now deeply feel that I have wronged you by a hasty opinion. You will not suppose me insincere in saying that I look upon some of your late pieces as the finest I have *ever read*. I allude especially to your poem about Shelley, and the one of which the *refrain* is 'She came from Heaven to tell me she was blest.' Upon reading these compositions I felt the necessity of our being friends. Will you accept my proffer of friendship?" He goes on to say that he has resumed the project of the "Penn Magazine" and is in search of a partner: "As I have no money myself, it will be absolutely necessary that I procure a partner who has some pecuniary means. I mention this to you, for it is not impossible that you yourself may have both the will and the ability to join me."

Chivers's father had died, and the estate was about to be divided, so it was quite possible that this offer might bear fruit; he was himself just going South to receive his portion, and he wrote a polite and cordial reply, July 12, 1842, in which he explained the situation, but made no promise with regard to the "Penn Magazine" except that he would obtain subscribers for it. The progress of the affair is shown by Poe's next letter.

POE TO CHIVERS

Philadelphia Sep. 27, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR, Through some accident, I did not receive your letter of the 15th inst: until this morning, and now hasten to reply.

Allow me, in the first place, to thank you sincerely for your kindness in procuring me the subscribers to the Penn Magazine. The four names sent will aid me most materially in this early stage of the proceedings.

As yet I have taken no overt step in the measure, and have not even printed a Prospectus. As soon as I do this I will send you several. I do not wish to announce my positive resumption of the original scheme until about the middle of October. Before that period I have reason to believe that I shall have received an appointment in the Philadelphia Custom House, which will afford me a good salary and leave the greater portion of my time unemployed. With this appointment to fall back upon, as a certain resource, I shall be enabled to start the Magazine without difficulty, provided I can make an arrangement with either a practical printer possessing a small office, or some one not a printer, with about \$1000 at command.

It would, of course, be better for the permanent influence and success of the journal that I unite myself with a gentleman of education and similarity of thought and feeling. It was this consciousness which induced me to suggest the enterprise to yourself. I knew no one with whom I would more readily enter into association than yourself.

I am not aware what are your political views. My own have reference to no one of the present parties; but it has been hinted to me that I will receive the most effectual patronage from Government for a journal which will admit occasional papers in support of the Administration. For Mr. Tyler personally, & as an honest statesman, I have the highest respect. Of the government patronage, upon the condition specified, *I am assured*, and this alone will more than sustain the Magazine.

The only real difficulty lies in the beginning—in the pecuniary means for getting out the two (or three) first numbers; after this all is sure, and a great triumph may, and indeed *will* be achieved. If you can command about \$1000 and say that you will join me, I will write you fully as respects the details of the plan, or we can have an immediate interview.

It would be proper to start with an edition of 1000 copies. For this number, the monthly expense, including paper (of the finest quality) composition, press-work & stitching will be about 180\$. I calculate *all* expenses at about \$250—which is \$3000 per annum—a *very* liberal estimate. 1000 copies at \$5=5000\$—leaving a nett profit of 2000\$, even supposing we have only 1000 subscribers. But I am sure

of *beginning* with at least 500, and make no doubt of obtaining 5000 before the expiration of the 2d year. A Magazine, such as I propose, with 5000 subscribers will produce us each an income of some \$10,000; and this you will acknowledge is a game worth playing. At the same time there is no earthly reason why such a Magazine may not, eventually, reach a circulation as great as that of "Graham's" at present—viz. 50,000.

I repeat that it would give me the most sincere pleasure if you would make up your mind to join me. I am sure of our community of thought and feeling, and that we would accomplish *much*.

In regard to the poem on Harrison's death ["The Mighty Dead"], I regret to say that nothing can be done with the Philadelphia publishers. The truth is that the higher order of poetry is, and always will be, in this country, unsaleable; but, even were it otherwise, the present state of the Copy-Right Laws will not warrant any publisher in *purchasing* an American book. The only condition, I am afraid, upon which the poem can be printed, is that you print it at your own expense.

I will see Griswold and endeavor to get the smaller poems from him.¹ A precious fellow is he!

Write as soon as you receive this & believe me

Yours most truly
Edgar A. Poe.

There was, however, to be no result from any of these plans of Poe. Chivers lost a little daughter, and went South for the burial. The following letter shows the real ground in his nature for those poems of bereavement which he wrote so broodingly, and by virtue of which something of his kinship with Poe existed.

CHIVERS TO POE

Augusta, Ga., Dec. 7th [1842]

MY DEAR SIR: You will doubtless be very much surprised to hear that I am so far from New York. When I wrote to you last, I told you that I would write on to my brother, the Administrator of my father's estate, and ascertain when I could receive my part of the money. When I wrote to him I had no idea of coming to the South, but there is not a man in the world who can tell to-day what he will do to-morrow. Hope, with her snowy wings, soared, beckoning me away, up to the gates of heaven. My anticipations were then

as joyful—as my hopes were bright—every thing on the face of the earth appeared bright to me. Now my hope is dead—the beautiful saintly [illegible] dove which soared so high from the earth—luring my impatient soul to wander, delighted, from prospect to prospect—has been wounded in her midway flight to heaven by the keen icy arrows of Death! My anticipations are sorrowful—every thing in the round world is dark to me! The little tender innocent blue-eyed daughter of my heart—the soul of my own soul—the life of my own life—"my joy, my food, my all—the world"—is dead!

"Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—O, never more!"

All that I can say now is in the divine language of Shelley:

"Come, obscure Death,
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms!
Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to [the] sleep from which none wake!"

Never can I see another day of peace on earth! She was so healthy, so happy, so innocent, and so beautiful, that I did not believe that she could die. She was sick only two days—*sick* when I was not near to render her assistance! My God! there is a darkness gathering round my soul of the deepest sorrow, which the light of no future joy can ever illumine! No, the very joys of others make my sorrows more intolerable! Why did man come into the world to see so much sorrow? Why should he be the father of those who are to live only long enough to be interesting to him, and then to lose them? My little daughter of three years old—my blue-eyed child—is gone! A precious being—my Angel-child—in whose seraphic soul such heavenly divineness dwelt, I did not think her of this world! Death has hushed her innocent prattle. In the deep [illegible] grave of the silence of her voice the music of the world is buried! My soul is so sorrowful for the loss of that sweet voice that it can never more listen to any other tones! Have you ever lost a child? If you ever have, then you can know what I mean when I tell you that I have lost the whole world—that there can be no more spring nor summer—but an endless winter cold and chilly to the heart! But whether you have ever lost one or not, I know you possess such fine feelings that you can sympathise with me. I have

¹ "Alluding to his not having returned the Poems,—although requested so often—which he never did."—*Chivers's note*. These poems are no doubt the same facsimiled from MS. in Mr.

Benton's "In the Poe Circle," where the curious reader may find them. Mr. Benton must have derived them from the Griswold papers.

brought her on to the south to have her buried by the side of my dear old mother whom I loved next to heaven—that is the reason why I have not written to you before this. What have you done with the “Penn Magazine”? When I received your last letter in regard to it, my little blue-eyed daughter sat upon my knee and smiled in my face while I read it. To read your letters, with my little child sitting on my knee, in regard to an enterprise in which we were to be partners, filled my heart with joyful anticipations. When I lay her tender body in the earth, I will then plant flowers upon her grave—such flowers as she loved—for she loved flowers beyond any child I ever knew—flowers that will last through all the winter. Why may I not hope that her soul will come to me again?

Yours

T. H. C.

To E. A. Poe, Esq. N. Y.

To this letter Chivers received no answer, apparently, nor to two letters written in 1843; but he was a persistent correspondent, and in the spring of 1844 made another attempt, asking whether the “Penn Magazine” was abandoned, and saying that he would receive his part of his father's estate in July and would be glad to join Poe in the enterprise, “provided it would be to my interest to do so.” The rest of the letter, which is long and interesting, is given up to literary criticism and transcendentalism. Poe replied to this at once:

POE TO CHIVERS

New York July 10, 44.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Yours of June 15 was forwarded here to me on the 25th ult. Believe me, I am truly pleased to hear from you again. The two letters of which you speak were received; but, in the hurry of mere business, I chanced to file them away among a package of letters endorsed “answered,” and thus it was that I failed to reply. For many months I have been haunted by the sentiment of some duty unperformed, but was unable to say what it was.

Touching the “Penn Magazine,” or rather the “Stylus,” (for this is the title I should finally adopt)—I have by no means given up the intention of issuing it; my views respecting it are only confirmed by time, and more intimate acquaintance with our literature, as well as with the business of Magazine publication. I am only “biding my time”—awaiting means and an opportunity. Should you conclude to join me, we will not fail to make fame and fortune. When you feel ready to attempt the enterprise, you will find me here—at New

York—where I live, at present, in strict seclusion, busied with books and ambitious thoughts, until the hour shall arrive when I may come forth with a certainty of success. A Magazine like Graham's will never do. We must do something far better—but we will talk of these matters personally. When you come to New York, put a letter to my address in the P. Office, and we will thus find each other.

I have been lately lecturing on “American Poetry” and have drawn profuse tears from large and intellectual audiences by the recital of your “Heavenly Vision”—which I can never weary of repeating.

You mistake me in supposing I dislike the transcendentalists—it is only the pretenders and sophists among them. My own faith is indeed my own. You will find it, somewhat detailed, in a forthcoming number of the “Columbian Magazine,” published here. I have written for it an article headed “Mesmeric Revelation,” which see. It may be out in the August or September number.

I disagree with you in what you say of man's advance towards perfection. Man is now only more active, not wiser, nor more happy, than he was 6000 years ago. To say that we are better than our progenitors, is to make the foregone ages only the rudiment of the present & future; whereas each individual man is the rudiment of a future material (*not* spiritual) being. It were to suppose God unjust to suppose those who have died before us possessed of less advantage than ourselves. There is no such thing as spirituality. God is material. All things are material; yet the matter of God has all the qualities which we attribute to Spirit: thus the difference is scarcely more than of words. There is a matter without particles—of no atomic composition: this is God. It permeates and impels all things, and thus is all things in itself. Its agitation is the thought of God, and creates. Man and other beings (inhabitants of stars) are portions of this unparticled matter, individualised by being incorporated in the ordinary or particled matter. Thus they exist rudimentally. Death is the painful metamorphosis. The worm becomes the butterfly—but the butterfly is still material—of a matter, however, which cannot be recognized by our rudimental organs. But for the necessity of the rudimental life, there would have been no stars—no worlds—nothing which we term material. These spots are the residences of the rudimental things. At death, these, taking a new form, of a novel matter, pass everywhere, and act all things, by mere volition, and are cognizant of all secrets but *the one*—the nature of the volition of God—of the agitation of the unparticled matter.

Write upon receipt of this—and *do not* affront me by paying postage, or speaking of

these trivialities at all. There is nothing which gives me more sincere pleasure than the receipt of your letters.

Your friend most sincerely,
E. A. Poe.

The above letter is very like one written to Lowell, July 2, and both resemble the "Mesmeric Revelation" to which they refer. Chivers replied, much delighted with the turn the correspondence had taken, August 6, and again September 24, without receiving any further lucubration from Poe; but correspondence was now to be supplemented by personal acquaintance on the occasion of Chivers's visit to New York in the next summer, 1845, where he brought out his third volume of verse, "The Lost Pleiad." Chivers's account of his walks and talks with Poe is wild and rambling, but it is not lacking in vividness. He wrote out these reminiscences and impressions, after Poe's death, for a life which he meant to publish in Poe's defense. It is best to give them in his own words and order, with a gentle warning to the uninitiated reader that here is Chivers in his full Chiveresqueness.

CHIVERS'S REMINISCENCES OF POE

POE'S temperament was bilious, nervous, sanguineous—but, upon first view, appeared to be bilious, sanguineous, nervous. His forehead was broad—particularly in the region between the two lobes of the organ of Ideality—high—and receded gently, looking, from the peculiar conformation of his head, a good deal higher and broader than it really was. His hair was dark as a raven's wing. So was his beard—which he always kept shaved. His form was slender, and by no means prepossessing—and appeared to me, in walking, to lean a little forward with a kind of meditative or Grecian bend. In dress he was remarkably neat and tidy, and, had his means permitted, he, no doubt, would have prided himself in his neatness. This was the result rather of his proficiency in the true knowledge of the Aesthetics of dress, than [of] any foppish admiration which he might have entertained for what may be called finery. When I first became acquainted with him, he used to carry a crooked-headed hickory walking-cane in his hand whenever we went out to walk. As he did not have this cane the very first time that we went out together—but purchased it immediately afterwards—I presumed, at the time, that he had gotten it because I had one—as it was precisely like mine. This he flourished, as he walked, with considerable grace—particularly

so when compared with a man who had never been in the habit of carrying a Cane.

His neck was rather long and slender, and made him appear, when sitting, rather taller than he really was. He, also, appeared when sitting, to have a gentle and rather graceful taper of the bust and shoulders upward. This was very peculiar. His eyes were of a neutral violet tint, rather inclining to hazel, and shone not with a dazzling or brilliant sparkle, but rather with a mildly subdued serenity of intellectual splendor—perhaps on account of the dark shadow cast upon them by the overhanging and rather impressive cloud of his Moon-like brow—giving them that soft celestial glow of soul which characterizes the loftiest enthusiasm. Their lashes were long, dark and silken, hanging over them like willows napping [?] by the moon—Lake—or cumuli of chaos over the God-suffused waters of the Eternal Wells. When the Heaven of his brow was free from clouds—which appeared always to be the case when his soul was not racked either by the thoughts of his poverty, or the remembrance of the manifold insults he had received from anonymous Correspondents, who pestered him from envy of his genius and his uncompromising hostility to the basest ignorance—the intellectual placidity of his mildly becoming eyes was beautiful.

His mouth was like Apollo's Bow unbent and, in the natural curve, said sorrow, with imagination, but, when wreathed into smiles by any cheering inflorescence of his soul—disclosing a set of ivory teeth as evenly set as the Opal walls of Eden—was absolutely captivating and beautiful. So remarkably pleasing was this transition from sadness to sunshiny gladness of hilarity, that I now seem to see him smiling before me—lighting up the dim vistas of my memory as the rain-fraught lightning does the darkness of a Summer night. But there was this peculiarity about his smile, which I do not remember ever to have seen in any other person, namely, that it did not appear to be the result of *gladness* of heart altogether—nor gladness mixed with sorrow—but a pleasing satire—a smiling review of all that had just been said by him—like the triumphant world-renovating laughter of the weeping Heavens—expressive of that beautiful Apollonian disdain which seemed to say, "*What you 'see through a glass darkly,' I behold through the couched eye of an illuminated Seer.*" Not only did he look this, but he felt it—felt it with all his inmost soul. It was, in the truest acceptation of the term, a smile of Genius. Were I now called upon from the bottom of my heart, to give a faithful exhibition of this man's real nature, I would say that he was the Incarnation of the Greek Prometheus chained to the Mount Caucasus of demi-civilized Humanity, with the black Vulture of Envy, feed-

ing on his self-replenished heart; while upon his trembling lips sat enthroned the most eloquent persuasion alternating with the bitterest, triumphant and God-like Scorn. This is my candid opinion of the man—for there was not a single day in [the] year that he did not receive, through the Post anonymous letters from cowardly villains which so harrowed up his feelings that he, at length, was driven to the firm belief that the whole world of Humanity was nothing less than the veritable Devil himself tormenting him here in earth for nothing. Where is there a Literary man who has not experienced the same thing? To these things he made himself amenable by writing Criticisms with his own name attached to them—which any other man would have done. But he had not the fortitude to resist—to treat with utter contempt these cowardly attacks—but visited upon all men the iniquities only of a few. He was, no doubt, firmly convinced, in his own mind, that the meanest thing under Heaven is the scoundrel who will write from the base and cowardly feeling of envy, to his superior, an anonymous and abusive letter. Hell is too good for such a beast.

His arms and hands were slender, and tapered very gracefully and gently, down to the ends of his fingers, which were very tender, gentlemanly, and lady-like. In fact, his hands were truly remarkable for their roseate softness and lily-white, feminine delicacy. You could have judged of his nobility by his hands.

His face was rather oval—tapering in its contour rather suddenly to the chin, which was very classical—and, especially when he smiled, really handsome. His countenance was tropical in its aspect—precisely the reverse of his heart, which, like the fountains of Solomon, had long been kept sealed up, as something sacred, from the vulgar gaze of the world—his face, whenever he wrote long at any one time, putting on a sickly, sallow, and rather pallid hue—but never to such an extent as [to] indicate indisposition. His digestion was always good—which is *prima facie* evidence that he was *never a student*.

His dress was always remarkably neat for one in his circumstances. But I do not believe that it would have done for him to have had money. He was ruined in his youth. His College-life in Virginia was the cause of all his after-inebriation. That was the infernal whirlpool into which was driven the beautiful milk-white Ship of his soul, never to be reclaimed. Is it not one of the most remarkable things in the world, that any man of his abilities should have been so amenable to the dictations of others?

The time when Chivers met Poe was the summer of 1845, during which Poe drank a good deal, and it is undesirable to publish

the first reminiscences in detail. They contain an account of his meeting Poe in Nassau street, New York, in an intoxicated condition. Chivers went home with him, and narrates the incidents of the walk, chief of which was an encounter with Lewis Gaylord Clark, editor of the "Knickerbocker Magazine," whom Poe threatened to attack; but Clark, seeing how matters stood, bowed himself out of the way. Chivers gives a detailed account of Poe's reception by Mrs. Clemm. The reminiscences continue from this point:

The next day when I called to see him, he was not to be found. On the next, when I called, he was in bed pretending to be sick, but with nothing in the world the matter with him—his sole object for lying there being to avoid the delivering of the Poem which he had promised—for he was reading Macaulay's *Miscellanies*. I then hired a carriage, and took him out to ride. . . .

The next day, about half past three o'clock, as I was going up to see him again, I met him dressed in his finest clothes, going down towards the *Broadway Journal Office*. As soon as he saw me, he put his hand in his vest-pocket, and drawing out a piece of paper, unfolded it and read it to me. It was an advertisement which he said he was going to have published in the *B. J.*, announcing to the Public that the partnership, formerly existing between him and Mr. Charles F. Briggs, was then dissolved. On asking my opinion about the insertion of it, I told him I would do no such thing. He followed my advice. He was then on his way to Providence—had not a dollar in the world—borrowed ten from me—requesting me at the same time not to let his wife or Mrs. Clemm know anything about his going—and left me. Some lady, he said, had written to him to come on there, and he was obliged to go, but would return again the next day. He came back the next day, as he had promised.

One of the most striking peculiarities of Mr. Poe was, his perfect *abandon*—boyishness indifference—not only in regard to the opinions of others, but an uncompromising independence of spirit, which seemed to say that he was not only obnoxious to the prejudices of everybody, or [but (?)] possessed, within his own soul, such a self-consciousness of his own merit as would insure their respect. Yet no man living loved the praises of others better than he did—for I remember that whenever I happened to communicate to him any thing touching his abilities as a writer, his bosom would heave like the troubled sea.

His voice was soft, mellow, melodious, and rather more flexible than powerful. It was as musical as Apollo's Lute, and as plaintive in

its utterances of his Memnonian Mysteries, as the prisms-lipped Shell when murmuring of its never-tiring reminiscences of the ever-sounding Sea. When he read Poetry, his voice rolled over the rhythm of the verses like silver notes over golden sands—rather monotonously and flute-like—so that, it may be said here, that he rather *cantilated* than read. He made use of but very little Art in his recitations—never uttering any declamatory tones, or using the lowest Theatrical emphasis, but the most modest, chaste and delicate delivery. From this it must be evident to every one that his Readings were not very effective; and such is the very fact. His reading of Lyrical Poetry was certainly very melodious and beautiful, but he lacked that well-attuned power of modulation in accent, emphasis and cadence, necessary to make either an Epic or Dramatic writing effective.

The periodical frowns which darkened this noble man's brow, told too eloquently how much he had suffered—as much perhaps, from his own lofty nature, which lifted him too far above the common sphere of poetical [practical (?) and calculating Humanity—as from any real ill-will in the minds of other men. His Heaven-aspiring soul, weary-laden with a heavy inspiration, set forever in his body looking like an Angel exiled from Heaven through his shadowy eyes. He was an enthusiast, in the loftiest sense of the term—forever pluming his Eagle wings for Angel-flights into the pure empyrean of Poetry. His talk was not only truly Coleridgian—graphically melodious—his manner being amply Sydnean, but transcendently eloquent—much better than the very best of his prose writings—partaking, in a great measure, of the subtle and golden spirit of his unwritten Ideals. Poising his soul, as on Angel's wings, into the sacred Adytum of all Beauty, his face would become suffused with the radiant glow of the inspiration which descended upon him, like light from Heaven, until all the world became to his hearer, as well as to himself, for the moment at least, the reality of the Ideal Elysium which his genius was then painting. But his eloquence was artistical rather than passionate. His soul was a living Vatican, wherein was stored away all the Greek cold, marble forms of Beauty which were the studied creations of his proficiency in the abstract potency of consummate Art, rather than the spontaneous offsprings of a heart inspired by the pure motive of Love. His home was a Dream Land, peopled with Ghosts, Ghouls, Vampyres, and the glorified spirits of the unapproachable dead—for whose eternal communion his soul panted with an irresistible yearning as truly as the night-long vigils of the patient Moon. Nor did the traditional darkness of the grave have any terror for him—for he longed to embrace Death with

all the fervor of a faithful lover for his mistress. What to other men appeared to be total darkness, was to him light from Heaven. The truth is he was tired of the world, and Hell itself would have been a better place for him than the society of heartless men. He had long before ceased to believe in men,—and women, tortured as he was by doubtful misgivings, had but very few charms for him. He had sung his last song here on earth, and was now ready to rush out of time into the only Solace of his soul—the arms of Eternity. Maddened by the irreverence of the world—demanding that reverence which he thought was due to his genius—like a wild Indian goaded by his pursuers over the tumultuous cataract into the boiling abyss below—he plunged headlong down—down—down—into the surging vortex of the everlasting darkness of death—never to walk the earth again!

Thus lived—thus died—thus passed away from the world the divine spirit of Edgar A. Poe. But he who had reaped only poverty, here in this world, now that he is gone to his reward in Heaven, shall reap a golden Harvest of ripe praises not only from men in time, but from the Angels in Eternity.

We drink ambrosia out of the Cup of the gods in contemplating the life of that man—whose power commensurate with his greatness shall grow on, widening with the Ages, like some great immortal Moon whose fulness shall never become fully full.

It was plainly during the first week of their acquaintance that the following conversations took place, on the occasion of Chivers's calling upon Poe when he was confined to the house. The account begins abruptly.

CHIVERS'S CONVERSATIONS WITH POE

"WHAT do you think of the present Pantheon of English Poets?" asked I.

"I consider Tennyson not only the greatest Poet in England, at present, but the *greatest* one, in many senses, that England, or any other Country, ever produced," answered he. "Horne, perhaps, is next. The rest are not worth naming."

"But you have left out Thomas Lovel[!]
Beddoes!" said I.

"Yes, I had forgotten him," replied he. "He has written some very fine Dramatic Poems. You know my opinion of Miss Rossetti [Barrett (?)], as you have read my Criticisms on the *Drama of Exile* in the *Broadway Journal*. She stands, as a Poet, when compared with the male Poets of England, midway between Shelley and Tennyson—promising more of the Shelleyan abandon than the truly Ten-

nysonian Poetic sense—but infinitely above any female that England ever produced—or, in fact, any other Country. Speaking of Horne, reminds me of the two copies of *Orion* which he sent me by the last Steamer from England.” Reaching his hand over towards the left side of the bed, he took up two pamphlets in twelve mo. form and handed them to me. On looking over the title-page I saw that it was *Orion, an Epic Poem* in three Books, by R. H. Horne. On the back of one of them was an address “to E. A. Poe,” in Horne’s own hand writing. On the other volume, with a change of the title as would suit the Edition which he requested Poe to have brought out in New York. This he presented to me. The other he kept himself, because, as he then said himself, it contained the address in Horne’s own hand writing. I then asked him if it was his intention to bring out a new Edition in New York? He then said:

“I have taken this book to every reputable Publisher in this City, and not one of them is willing to take upon himself the responsibility of the publication. Here is a work which is, at least, five hundred years in advance of the Age, and yet I cannot get a publisher for it in America, but if it were a book of romance, full of absurd improbabilities, bad grammar, and wanting in every other thing necessary to make it a book at all, I could find a Publisher at every corner. But here is a work superior even to *Milton’s Paradise Lost*, which I do not expect ever to see published in America. There is not a Publisher in America, that deserves the name even of Bookseller.”

I then recited to him the following beautiful passage from Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*.

“Drink! be the . . . [nectar] circling through
your veins,
The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods!
Till exultation burst in one wide voice,
Like music from Elysian winds!”

Turning over in the bed and, opening his large, mildly-beaming hazel eyes, he looked me full in the face with a suspiciously apprehensive awelike stare, the reason of which I was unable to understand until after the lapse of five years—when it was proven to me that the reason why he did so was, because he supposed I had quoted the passage in order to tantalize him for his periodical inebriation.

Then locking the forefinger of his right hand into the little one of his left—his mild hazel eyes beaming with the heavenly light of the inspiration of the [illegible] which then descended upon him—while his mellow shrill-like voice rolled over his lips like the soft tones of an Æolian Harp when the music that has been sleeping in its strings is awakened by the Breezes of Eden laden with sweet Spices from the Mountains of the Lord—his soul ascended

on the Dove-like wings of rapt enthusiasm into the highest thoughts [illegible] Heaven of Beauty—scattering down from the luminous wake of his soaring the manna-dews of an everlasting eloquence.

Not long after this—even while we were talking about the state of his health—his wife entered the room, to whom he very politely introduced me. Presently Mrs. Clemm, his mother-in-law, came in, to whom he also introduced me. I was very much pleased with his wife. She appeared to me to be a very tender-hearted and affectionate woman—particularly so to him—whom she addressed with the endearing appellation of *My Dear!* But she was not a healthy woman, as I perceived after a little acquaintance with her—as, at irregular intervals—even while we were talking—she was attacked with a terrible paroxysm of coughing whose spasmodic convulsions seemed to me almost to rend asunder her very body. This was so severe at times as to threaten her with strangulation. I then asked him if Mrs. Poe had been long ill? He replied, “Yes, she has always been sick, never having been well since I first knew her!”

“Has she caught cold? or [is] it a consumption under which she is laboring?” I then asked.

“No—it is not a cold—Dr. Mitchell of Philadelphia, says that she has the Bronchitis. She ruptured a blood vessel while singing, in Philadelphia, and had never been well since. Do you know Dr. Mitchell? He is a Poet.”

I then said, “No, I am not acquainted with him; but have often seen his pieces in the papers.”

Mrs. Poe then got up and left the room—Mrs. Clemm, her mother, following her. Presently she returned with a glass of Lemonade, which she handed to me. Then turning to Poe, she asked, My dear! will you have a glass?

“No—I do not want any at present,” said he, with an indifferent [illegible] on the pillow of his head.

Handing her the empty glass, she then left the room. Poe then turning to me, said “I have long wished to see [you] upon a subject in which I am vitally interested. It is the publication of a Magazine about which I wrote you first from Philadelphia, to be called *The Stylus*. When I first wrote you from Philadelphia in the letter containing the Prospectus, it was my intention then to call it *The Penn Magazine*; but after having received your letter in which you suggested that such a title would render it too local, I then came to the conclusion to give it the name of the Pen with which the Greeks used to write, called *The Stylus*. This would not only be more significant, but determine in some sense—in fact, as far as any title whatsoever could—the precise nature of the work.”

By this time Mrs. Poe had returned into the room again with her bonnet on.

Turning to her, he then said, "My Dear, hand me the bundle of letters there in the Bureau Drawer touching upon the publication of *The Stylus*."

She then went to the Bureau, took out a large bundle of letters—perhaps a hundred—and laid them down on a small table near the window where I was sitting. Then passing around the bed towards the door, she said: "My Dear, I am going out with mother to take a small walk. I think it will do me good."

"Very well," said he, then turning towards me—"I am very willing. But you had, perhaps, better not walk too far. You know that Dr. Mitchell said too much exercise was not good for you."

She then said, while adjusting her bonnet-strings, "Shall I tell the Servant Girls should any persons call to see you, not to admit them?"

"Yes, tell her to tell them that I am sick and cannot see them," said he.

She then left the room.

"If you will glance at those letters there," said he to me, "you will perceive in what estimation my proposal to publish *The Stylus* is held [by] the most influential men in the Union. But those are not the tenth part of what I have received during the present year. I have many strong friends in the South and West who have promised me their aid in the procuring of subscribers. If you will open that letter which you now hold in your hand you will perceive that Mr. John Tomlin of Jackson, Tennessee, who has written some pretty little things, has already obtained me thirty good paying subscribers. This, you will perceive, is strong evidence in favor of our establishing the Magazine immediately."

I then asked him in what form it should be published.

"Just hand me that book yonder on the Bureau," said he, "and I will show you."

I got up and handed it to him.

"This," said he, "is part of a fine London Edition of *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, translated by Lane? It is beautifully printed—in just such a style as we ought to get up the Magazine. I saw it at Wiley & Putnam's Book Store, and bought it on purpose to show to you."

I then asked him how many papers ought each Number to contain.

He then said, "About the Number of Colton's Whig Review—but no less. If you say that you will join me, I will publish a new Prospectus in which I will announce ourselves to the Public as the Editors. But as I am not very well at present, we will talk more about it at our leisure. But if we intend to do anything, we ought to go to work immediately—for there is no time to be lost."

I then told him that I would be ready to join him by the first of January, 1846.

"Did you ever see Lowell?" asked he.

"No, I never did," was my reply.

"He called to see me the other day," said he; "but I was very much disappointed in his appearance as an intellectual man. He was not half the noble-looking person that I expected to see."

I then told him that I could not but wonder at his expecting to see any thing great in Lowell—when he had never given a single indication in any of his writings of any thing that even resembled a great man.

"He has written some fine things. Have you seen my Criticism on his Rosaline?"

"Yes," said I, "I have."

"Well, do you not consider that a fine Poem?" asked he.

"In some respects it may be called a fine Poem," said I; "but in many others it is any thing but a Lyric of the highest order."

"Do you not consider my Criticism a just one?" asked he.

"No, I do not," answered I—"inasmuch as you have over-praised him."

"In what respect do you consider that I have over-praised him?" asked he.

"In every possible one," answered I. "You have pronounced it one of the finest Poems ever written by any American; when it is as palpable a plagiarism as was ever palmed off by arrogant mental mediocrity upon a too credulous Public."

"In what sense do you consider it a plagiarism?" asked he.

"In every sense that can constitute it a Poem," I answered. "Not only in the rhythm but also the rhyming consonations. In fact, it is a plagiarism in the very chime of it. I grant you it is the best thing that he ever wrote; but in doing this, I only show you how poor every thing else that he has written is."

He then looked sad and remained taciturn for some time. "How do you like Shelley?" asked he, a little piqued.

"I consider him one of the greatest Poets that ever lived," I answered him. "His Cenci I consider not inferior, as a true Dramatic Poem, to the very best of Shakespeare's plays. In fact, in some senses it is superior to any thing that Shakespeare ever wrote."

"In passion he was supreme, but it was an unfettered enthusiasm ungoverned by the amenities of Art," answered he.

"But it was the clairvoyant fortuitousness of intuition," answered I. "Like St. John on the Island of Patmos he beheld his celestial Visions of the coming of the New Jerusalem of Man with the couched eyes of one of God's holiest Prophets."

"His principal forte was powerful abandon of rhythmical conception," answered he. "But

he lacked just that Tennysonian Art necessary to the creation of a perfect Poem. You are mistaken in supposing that passion is the *primum mobile* of the true Poet, for it is just the reverse. A pure Poem proper is one that is wholly destitute of a particle of passion."

"Then you admire Tennyson?" asked I.

"Yes, I consider him one of the greatest Poets that ever lived," answered he.

"My God! Poe! how can you say that?" asked I, in surprise. "Why, his Poems are as effeminate as a phlegmatic fat baby. He is the most perfectly Greek-statuesque, if you please, in his conceptions of any man that has ever lived since the days of Pericles."

"This is just what constitutes him one of the greatest geniuses that ever lived," answered he. "Passion has nothing to do with pure Poetry; for every drop of passion that you infuse into any Poem just so far do you materialize, deteriorate and render it no Poem. A pure Poem is a rhythmical creation of Beauty wholly destitute of every thing but that which constitutes purity, namely, etheristity."

"Well, but this would not only bring you in conflict with the time-honored opinions of the world, but be the establishing of a new mode of Criticism among the Nations," said I.

"True, but that does not give me a moment's concern," answered he, with an imperial self-consciousness of his own importance, as well as the perfect knowledge of the purity of the truth, that he had just spoken.

"If what you say be true, then two-thirds of every thing that Shakespeare ever wrote is absolutely good for nothing," said I.

"Certainly it is good for nothing. Nothing is good for any thing except that which contains within itself the essence of its own vitality," answered he. "Otherwise it is mortal and ought to die."

"Then if this be the case,—if all the Poetical works in the world were pruned of their excrescences,—there would be very little real Poetry left," answered I.

"Very little, indeed; but just enough to show that what I say of Poetry is true."

"Then Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Montgomery, Southey and many other world-renowned Sons of Song would fare badly."

"But no worse than they deserve," answered he, very peremptorily.

"What do you think of Keats?" asked I.

"He was the greatest of any of the English Poets of the same age, if not at any age," answered he, with the air of a man who was not only conscious of his own consummate ability, but who had, long before, deliberately formed his opinions. "He was far in advance of the best of them, with the exception of Shelley, in the study of his themes. His principal fault is the grotesqueness of his abandon."

"What do you think of Bryant?" asked I.

"I hold the policy—or shall I call it politeness—to speak in noticing Bryant's Poems, respectfully—or, perhaps, I should here, too, qualify my expression by saying flatteringly of the private opinions of Literary circles. But did you not know—does not every true Critic know—that Mr. Bryant himself does not know in what true Poetry consists, that it is eternally impossible these Private Circles should. But would any honest man—would any man but one who is an arrant coward—morally as well as physically—withhold his conscientious opinions of the merits of any book merely because they would come in conflict with the preconceived opinions of the world? Certainly not. Then why should any man hesitate to say, most positively, that these before-mentioned Private Circles know nothing at all about the matter? They do not write Poetry—nor do they Criticise it—then how can they know any thing about it? If Mr. Bryant himself does not know what it is, how can his admirers? Has it come to this, that the Critic knows more than the Artist? It has always heretofore been the belief that the Artist was the Mother of the Critic.

"That Mr. Bryant does not know, is proven by this incontrovertible fact, that he has never written the highest order of Poetry. Of what moment is it with any true Critic that any man, or any number of unpoetical men, should admire Bryant? No moment at all. It only proves that the Poet whom they admire, has something in him *worthy* of admiration—that is all. But this only proves that they are incompetent to judge of the highest order of Poetry, inasmuch as the individual whom they admire, cannot write it. Yet, this is the sum total of all that has ever been, or *ever will be*, said about the opinions of Private Circles.

"Everybody pretends he knows something—*particularly* about Poetry. You cannot meet with *any* man who will not tell you something about what *he likes* or what *he dislikes*. Many men whom I have met in my life, have intimated to me that what *they liked* in music was far in advance of any thing that was ever conceived of by any of the Italian Composers. Others, again, have given preference to the *Æthiopian Melodies*. I once knew a man who swore that *Sally in the Wildwoods* was far above any thing that Ole Bull could compose. I also once met with a lady who could not see any beauty at all in the Italian music. So the world wags. But who will be deterred from telling the truth on account of such people? Nobody in his senses. I verily believe that there are people in this world who, if they had nothing better to do, would absolutely fall in love with the Devil."

(Conclusion next month.)

THE POE-CHIVERS PAPERS

THE FIRST AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT OF ONE OF POE'S
MOST INTERESTING FRIENDSHIPS

EDITED BY GEORGE E. WOODBERRY

SECOND PAPER



CHIVERS did not remain long in New York in the memorable summer when he met his idol of genius face to face and consorted with him in so mundane a fashion. "The Lost Pleiad," his last volume of verse, was now safely published. Poe noticed it in the "Broadway Journal," August 2, 1845; he describes the volume as the honest and fervent utterance of an exquisitely sensitive heart which has suffered much and long. "The poems," he goes on, "are numerous, but the thesis is one—*death*—the death of beloved friends. The poet seems to have dwelt among the shadows of tombs, until his very soul has become a shadow. . . . In a word, the volume before us is the work of that *rara avis*, an educated, passionate, yet unaffectedly simple-minded and single-minded man, writing from his own vigorous impulses—from the necessity of giving utterance to poetic passion—and thus writing *not* to mankind, but solely to himself. The whole volume has, in fact, the air of a rapt soliloquy." He then gives a long extract from the poem on Shelley, and ends by complimenting the volume as "possessing merit of a very lofty—if not of the very loftiest order."

The correspondence was resumed in August by a missing letter of Chivers from Philadelphia to which the following is an answer.

POE TO CHIVERS

New York: Aug. 29.

MY DEAR FRIEND, I sit down, in the midst of all the hurry of getting out the paper, to

reply to your letter, dated 25th. What can you be thinking about? You complain of me for not doing things which I had no idea that you wanted done. Do you not see that my short letter to you was written on the very day on which yours was addressed to me? How, then, could you expect mine to be a reply to yours? You must have been making a voyage to "Dreamland."

What you say about the \$50, too, puzzles me. You write—"Well I suppose you must have it"—but it does not come. Is it possible that you mailed it in the letter? I presume not; but that you merely refer to your intention of sending it. For Heaven's sake do—as soon as you get this—for almost everything (as concerns the paper) depends upon it. It would be a thousand pities to give up just as everything flourishes. As soon as, by hook or by crook, I can get Wiley & Putnam's book done, I shall have plenty of money—\$500 at least—& will punctually repay you.

I have been making all kinds of inquiries about the "broken" money [referring to a commission from Chivers to obtain some paper money of the Bank of Florida]—but as yet have not found it. Today I am on a new scent and may possibly succeed. The "Southern Patriot" is published at Charleston. I have no copy—but you can see it anywhere on file I presume, at Washington. The "Morning News" of this city had, also, a handsome notice, digested from mine in the B. J. Colton's Magazine will also have a favorable one. You may depend upon it that I will take good care of your interest & fame, but let me do it in my own way.

Thank you for the play—poems—and Luciferian Revelation—as soon as I get a chance I will use them. The L. R.¹ is *great*—& your last poem is a noble one. I send on to day the books you mention.

Virginia and Mrs. Clemm send their warmest love to you & your wife & children. We all feel as if we knew your family.

God bless you, my friend.

Truly yours,

Poe.

I have not touched a drop of the "ashes"² since you left N. Y.—& I am resolved not to touch a drop as long as I live. I will be with you as soon as it is in any manner possible. I *depend on* you for the \$50.

¹ "Alluding to a MS. work on Poetry, entitled *Lyres Regalis*, then in his possession."—*Chivers's note*.

² "This was written in allusion to my having asked him in one of my letters touching his intemperance:— 'What would God think of that Angel who should condescend to dust his feet in the ashes of Hell?'"—*Chivers's note*.

Chivers replied from Georgia, September 9 and October 30 (and apparently at intervening dates), in a cordial, off-hand manner as of boon-companionship, congratulating Poe on his good resolutions and warning him that he must not "flatter" him or "practise lip-service," as his friendship is sincere and disinterested; and he explains why he does not send the money, though promising forty-five dollars soon. Poe, meanwhile, was writing for money to every one he dared—to Kennedy, Griswold, and George Poe, for example—to complete his purchase of the "Broadway Journal," and he made a last attempt upon Chivers.

POE TO CHIVERS

New York: Nov. 15, 45.

MY DEAR FRIEND—Beyond doubt you must think that I treat you ill in not answering your letters—but it is utterly impossible to conceive how busy I have been. The Broad-

way Journals I now send, will give you some idea of the reason. I have been buying out the paper, and of course you must be aware that I have had a tough time of it—making all kind of manœuvres—and editing the paper, without aid from anyone, all the time. I have succeeded, however, as you see—bought it out entirely, and *paid for it all*, with the exception of 140\$ which will fall due on the 1st of January next. I will make a fortune of it yet. You see yourself what a host of advertising I have. For Heaven's sake, my dear friend, help me *now* if you can—at *once*—for now is my time of peril. If I live until next month I shall be

beyond the need of aid. If you *can* send me the \$45, for Heaven's sake do it, *by return of mail*—or if not all, a part. Time with me now is money & money more than time. I wish you were here that I might explain to you my hopes and prospects—but in a letter it is impossible—for remember that I have to do *everything* myself—edit the paper—get it to press—and attend to the multitudinous business besides.

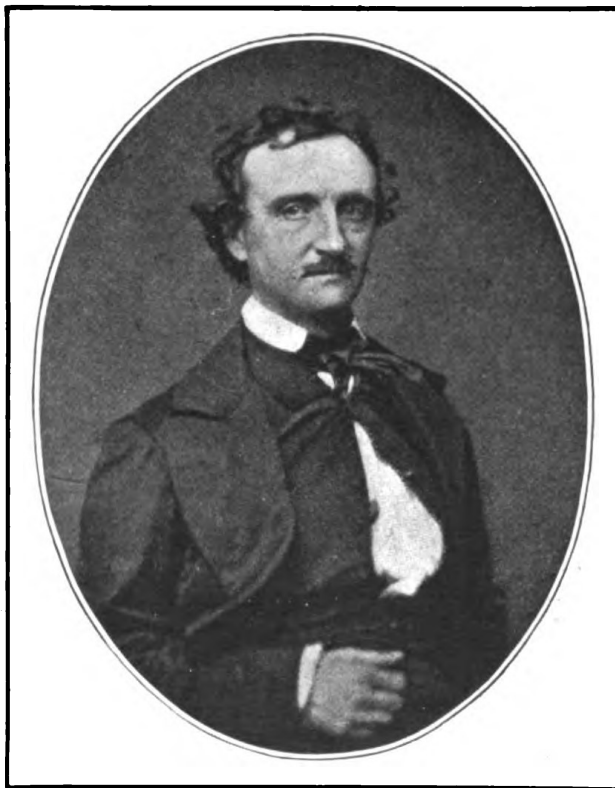
Believe me—will you not—my dear friend—that it is through no want of disposition to write you that I have failed to do so:—the moments I now

spend in penning these words are gold themselves—& more. By & bye I shall have time to breathe—and then I will write you fully.

You are wrong (as usual) about Archytas & Orion—both are as I accent them. Look in any phonographic Dictionary—say Bolles. Besides, wherever the words occur in ancient poetry, they are as I give them. What is the use of disputing an obvious point? You are wrong too, throughout, in what you say about the poem "Orion"—there is not the shadow of an error, in its rhythm, from A to W.

I never dreamed that you did not get the paper regularly until Bisco told me it was not sent. You must have thought it very strange.

So help me Heaven, I have sent and gone



EDGAR ALLAN POE

From a daguerreotype owned by the Players, New York, believed to be the last portrait of Poe. It is a copy made by Pratt of Richmond, Va., from an original taken by him.

personally in all the nooks & corners of Broken Land & such a thing as the money you speak of—is *not to be obtained*.

Write me soon—soon—& help me if you can. I send you my Poems.

God bless you.

E. A. P.

We *all* send our warmest love to yourself, your wife & family.

Whether Chivers sent the money remains doubtful, as the six letters he wrote Poe in the ensuing nine months are missing. Meanwhile Poe had been obliged to give up the "Broadway Journal," had fallen ill, and was now at Fordham cottage in a wretched state of health and poverty. The following letter is one of the most courageous he ever wrote and shows him in his best mood.

POE TO CHIVERS

New-York, July 22/46.

MY DEAR FRIEND, I had long given you up (thinking that, after the fashion of numerous other *friends*, you had made up your mind to desert me at the first breath of what seemed to be trouble) when this morning I received no less than 6 letters from you, all of them addressed 195 East Broadway. Did you not know that I merely boarded at this house? It is a very long while since I left it, and as I did not leave it on very good terms with the landlady, she has given herself no concern about my letters—not one of which I should ever have received but for the circumstance of new tenants coming in to the house. I am living out of town about 13 miles, at a village called Fordham, on the railroad leading north. We are in a snug little cottage, keeping house, and would be very comfortable, but that I have been for a long time dreadfully ill. I am getting better, however, although slowly, and shall get *well*. In the meantime the flocks of little birds of prey that always take the opportunity of illness to peck at a sick fowl of larger dimensions, have been endeavoring with all their power to effect my ruin. My dreadful poverty, also, has given them every advantage. In fact, my dear friend, I have been driven to the very gates of death and a despair more dreadful than death, and I had not even *one* friend, out of my family, with whom to advise. What would I not have given for the kind pressure of your hand! It is only a few days since that I requested my mother in law, Mrs. Clemm, to write to you—but she put it off from day to day.

I send you, as you request, the last sheet of the "Luciferian Revelation." There are several other requests in your letters which I know you would pardon me for not attending

to if you only were aware of my illness, and how impossible it is for me to put my foot out of the house or indeed to help myself in any way. It is with the greatest difficulty that I write you this letter—as you may perceive, indeed, by the M.S. I have not been able to write *one line* for the Magazines for more than 5 months—you can then form some idea of the dreadful extremity to which I have been reduced. The articles lately published in "Godey's Book" were written and paid for a long while ago.

Your professions of friendship I reciprocate from the inmost depths of my heart. Except yourself I have never met the man for whom I felt that intimate *sympathy* (of intellect as well as soul) which is the sole basis of friendship. Believe me that never, for one moment, have I doubted the sincerity of your *wish* to assist me. There is not one word you say that I do not *see* coming up from the depths of your heart.

There is one thing you will be glad to learn:—It has been a long while since any artificial stimulus has passed my lips. When I see you—should that day ever come—this is a topic on which I desire to have a long talk with you. I am done forever with drink—depend upon that—but there is much more in this matter than meets the eye.

Do not let anything in this letter impress you with the belief that I *despair* even of worldly prosperity. On the contrary although I feel ill, and am ground into the very dust with poverty, there is a sweet *hope* in the bottom of my soul.

I need not say to you that I rejoice in your success with the silk. I have always conceived it to be a speculation full of promise if prudently conducted. The revulsion consequent upon the silk mania has, of course, induced the great majority of mankind to look unfavorably upon the business—but such feelings should have no influence with the philosophic. Be cautious and industrious—that is all.

I enclose you a slip from the "Reveillée." You will be pleased to see how they appreciate me in England.

When you write, address simply "New York City." There is no Post office at Fordham.

God bless you.

Ever your friend,

Edgar A. Poe.

P.S. I have been looking over your "Luciferian Revelation" again. There are some points at which I might dissent with you—but there [are] a 1000 glorious thoughts in it.

Chivers replied to this February 21 and April 4, 1847, and possibly at other dates, but Poe seems to have felt less interest in the correspondence. Chivers invites Poe



From the original portrait by C. G. Thompson, in the Athenæum, Providence, R. I., to which it was presented in 1884 by W. F. Channing, M.D. Half-tone plate engraved by H. Davidson

SARAH HELEN WHITMAN, 1838

Mrs. Whitman, who achieved much distinction as a writer of verse and prose, was born in Providence in 1803. Her literary career followed upon the death of her husband, a lawyer of Boston, in 1833. She and Poe maintained a friendly intercourse, which, after the death of his wife, grew into a conditional engagement of marriage, soon after broken on the insistence of her friends. This occurred in 1848, not long before Poe's death. She wrote a little volume in praise of the poet.

to come to the South to live. "I will take care of you as long as you live—although, if ever there was a perfect mystery on earth you are one—and one of the most mysterious." With the expression of a hope to see him in May, in New York, Chivers's part of the correspondence ends. Poe, on his part, wrote one more letter at least, a year later, on which Chivers notes: "The following is the last letter that I ever received from him."

POE TO CHIVERS

Fordham—Westchester Co.

July 13, 48.

MY DEAR FRIEND, I have just returned from an excursion to Lowell:—this is the reason why I have not been to see you. My mother will leave this note at your hotel in the event of your not being in when she calls. I am *very* anxious to see you—as I propose going on to Richmond on Monday. Can you not come out to Fordham and spend tomorrow and Sunday with me? We can talk over matters, then, at leisure. The cars for Fordham leave the depot at the City Hall almost every hour—distance 14 miles.

Truly yours
Poe.

Poe's last reference to his friend occurs in a letter to Mrs. Clemm, September, 1849: "I got a sneaking letter today from Chivers."

It is apparent from the foregoing papers, as well as from the letters of Chivers which are published in full by Professor Harrison, that he was filled with an enthusiastic admiration for Poe and worshiped his genius. It is the more striking a tribute because he was of a religious cast of mind and not a sharer in Poe's weaknesses. He was not one of those who went spurring with Poe; and in spite of what he knew and had seen, he maintained a high respect for his genius and a warm interest in his welfare. Chivers was a hero-worshiper, and he adored the spirit of poetry after that fashion that sees in the poet, whatever he may be humanly, only a great glory. When Poe died, and the trouble arose over Griswold's memoir of him, Chivers, like several others who had known Poe, was desirous to write a life of him and defend his memory. He made some collections for this purpose, and the reminiscences and letters already given are a part of his material. He offered this life to Ticknor,

October 27, 1852, as if it were completed; but as he continued to work on it after that date, it was probably never advanced beyond its present fragmentary condition. Its (manuscript) title-page reads as follows:

NEW LIFE

of

Edgar Allan Poe,

A

Faithful Analysis of His

Genius as a Poet, the

Publication of Many Golden Letters

(one Poem Never Before Published in Any of His Works), together with some Beautiful

Elegies on his Death

By

T. H. Chivers, M.D.

Dedication.

To the Eternal Spirit of the Immortal Shelley, this work is now most Solemnly dedicated, by one who longs to enjoy his company in Elysium.

The Author.

Its opening pages are a chaotic flow of eulogy in which Poe's mortal weaknesses are fully acknowledged, for Chivers entertained no illusions on that score, but Poe is worshiped as an incarnation of genius. Chivers's point of view is contained in his "Golden Letters," as follows:

GOLDEN LETTERS

It is not by the objective relationships of a man that we are to judge of his peculiar idiosyncrasies—his essential quality, psychological as even as physiological—but by his subjective experiences—these constituting the true *esse* of the *existence* of his life—the plenary Revelations of his inmost soul. As the tree is known by its fruits; so is a man by his works—these constituting the truly Hesperian Apples of the Paradise of his being in time. This is eminently true of the nature of the Poet whose soul is the crystalline Fountain from which flow all the living, singing rivulets of his life—watering the Vales of Immortality with their pellucid selves, while revealing to the enraptured imaginations of men the virgin gold which lies Sparkling through its amber.

This is true not only in regard to his Prose, and Poetical writings, but more especially to his letters—the most unsophisticated—most natural—truer revealers of the heart—than any or all others, for what he there writes is unpremeditated, intuitive heart histories.

This section of the biography is followed by a summary of the facts of his career given by Griswold. The only value of the

remainder lies in the few original papers which Chivers secured and thereby preserved. Among them is one more letter of Poe's, which is self-explanatory, and illustrates again the care Poe took to have the good opinion of the press if he could obtain it. It is addressed to the editor of the "National Archives," Ithaca, New York.

POE TO J. HUNT, JR.

New York March 17, 45.

DEAR SIR, There is something in the tone of your article on "The Broadway Journal" (contained in the "Archives" of the 13th.) which induces me to trouble you with this letter.

I recognize in you an educated, an honest, a chivalrous, but, I fear, a somewhat over-hasty man. I feel that you can appreciate what I do—and that you will not fail to give me credit for what I do well:—at the same time I am not quite sure that, through sheer hurry, you might not do me an injustice which you yourself would regret even more sincerely than I. I am anxious to secure you as a friend if you can be so with a clear conscience—and it is to enable you to be so with a clear conscience that I write what I am now writing.

Let me put it to you as to a frank man of honor—Can you suppose it possible that any human being could pursue a strictly impartial course of criticism for 10 years (as I have done in the *S. L. Messenger* and in *Graham's Magazine*) without offending irreparably a host of authors and their connexions?—but because these *were* offended, and gave vent at every opportunity to their spleen, would you consider my course an iota the less honorable on that account? Would you consider it just to measure my deserts by the yelpings of my foes, independently of your own judgment in the premises, based upon an actual knowledge of what I have done?

You reply—"Certainly not"; and, because I feel that this *must* be your reply, I acknowledge that I am grieved to see anything (however slight) in your paper that has the appearance of joining in with the outcry so very sure to be raised by the less honorable portion of the press under circumstances such as are my own.

I thank you sincerely for your expressions of good will—and I thank you for the reason that I value your opinion—when that opinion is fairly attained. But there are points at which you do me injustice.

For example, you say that I am sensitive (peculiarly so) to the strictures of others. There is no instance on record in which I have ever replied, directly or indirectly, to any strictures, personal or literary, with the single exception of my answer to Outis. You say, too,

that I use a quarter of the paper in smoothing over his charges—but four-fifths of the whole space occupied is by the letter of Outis itself, to which I wish to give all the publicity in my power, with a view of giving it the more thorough refutation. The charges of which you speak—the charge of plagiarism &c—are *not made at all*. These are mistakes into which you have fallen, through want of time to peruse *the whole* of what I said, and by happening upon unlucky passages. It is, of course, improper to decide upon my reply until you have heard it, and as yet I have only commenced it by giving Outis' letter with a few comments at random. There will be *four* chapters in all. My excuse for treating it at length is that it demanded an answer and no proper answer could be given in less compass—that the subject of imitation, plagiarism, &c is one in which the public has lately taken much interest & is admirably adapted to the character of a literary journal—and that I have some important developments to make, which the commonest principles of self-defence demand imperatively at my hands.

I know that you will now do me justice—that you will read what I have said & may say—and that you will absolve me, at once, of the charge of squirmishness or ill nature. If ever man had cause to be in good humor with Outis and all the world, it is precisely myself, at this moment—as hereafter you shall see.

At some future day we shall be friends, or I am much mistaken, and I will then put into your hands ample means of judging me upon my own merits.

In the meantime I ask of you, justice.

Very truly yours,

Edgar A. Poe.

To J. Hunt Jr.

P.S. I perceive that you have permitted some of our papers and the Boston journals to give you a wrong impression of my Lecture & its reception. It was better attended than any Lecture of Mr. Hudson's—by the most intellectual & refined portion of the city—and was complimented in terms which I should be ashamed to repeat, by the leading journalists of the City. See *Mirror*, *Morning News*, *Inquirer*, *New World*, &c. The only respectable N. Y. paper which did *not* praise it throughout, was the *Tribune* whose transcendental editors, or their doctrines, I attacked. My objection to the burlesque philosophy which the Bostonians have adopted, supposing it to be Transcendentalism, is the key to the abuse of the *Atlas* & *Transcript*. So well was the Lecture received that I am about to repeat it.

[Note on the outside.] Be kind enough to answer this immediately in order that I may know it has been rec'd.

Chivers applied to Mrs. Whitman of Providence, but he obtained no letters from her or other papers in respect to her relations with Poe except a copy of Pabodie's letter to Griswold, which has been often published. With Mrs. Clemm he was more successful. She replied to his request as follows:

MRS. CLEMM TO CHIVERS

Milford, Dec. 8th '52.

DEAR SIR, I received yours on monday, but owing to a violent head ache could not reply to you sooner. I had heard from Mrs. Whitman of Providence, of your intention concerning the work you mention. How much pleasure it would give me to aid you, with any thing relative to my dear Eddie. But I (most unfortunately) have nothing but his own precious letters to myself during his last absence from home. I wish you could see those letters,—they alone would convince you, how falsely Griswold has spoken of him. Oh! that I could see you for an hour, and could tell you of his many beautiful traits of character—of his devotion to my “darling Virginia,” and of his love and kindness to myself. When that hateful and untrue Biography first appeared, I nearly sunk under it, I was confined to bed for a long time with a nervous fever. But God spared my life to endure farther trials. As to Griswold's statement that my poor Eddie ever spoke of you unkindly, [it] is entirely untrue. You were one of the few he *admired and loved*. How often has he recited to me some of your beautiful poetry, and said “I would have been proud to have been the author of this article.” How often has he repeated, with tears in his dear eyes, that sublime poem of yours, “*She came from heaven to tell me she was blest.*” You know, dear Sir, my darling Eddie was not entirely perfect, and when he had indulged in a glass or two of wine, he was not responsible for either his words, or actions. If I had the means I would see you in Boston; but I have not. I have been staying in Lowell some time since my sad affliction, but owing to the severe climate, have been obliged to leave it. How many times I have wished to learn your address. . . . Will you have the kindness to send me your address *when* you are at home? . . . When I heard of my Eddie's death, I was at Fordham, and I then acted as I *well* knew he would have wished me to do. I destroyed all the letters he had ever received from his *female* friends, and many others of a private nature. Griswold told me he *must* see some of his correspondence, and I gave them to him with the understanding that he was to return them to me. Yours were among them. I have never been able to get them from him. Do you not think, dear sir, that God will pun-

ish him, for all the falsehoods he has told of my beloved Eddie?

With many wishes for your happiness I remain, dear Sir, your sincere friend,
Maria Clemm.

Chivers introduces the next letter with this note:

The following letter was sent to me for publication by Mrs. Mary [Maria] Clemm the mother-in-law of Mr. Poe. It is from Mrs. Elmira Shelton, the lady, in Baltimore [Richmond], to whom he was finally engaged to be married, and is, undoubtedly, one of the most beautiful, if not the very beautifullest letter that was ever written by any woman living or dead—being all heart—all soul—the truest, most perfect revelation of her boundless love. The man who could have inspired such love as this in the heart of a woman of such superior talents, possessed qualities far above any thing for which the world has ever given him credit—proving, most positively, that he kept unshewn within his soul a tenderness akin to that of the Angels in Heaven.

There is no Art in this letter, but it is all nature—fortuitous intuition—as spontaneous in its unsophisticated purity as the perfect love which inspired it—infinite love chastened now by as infinite a grief. I have never yet been able to read it without shedding tears. The truth is, it is an Epistolary Elegy—a funeral Oration—a pathetic Requiem—or the triumphant victory of his affection over the female heart. A more beautiful Elegy was never written on the death of any man—a Eulogy which not only preaches the truest gospel of the qualities of its subject, but makes immortal its author. It is the most perfect triumph of love over death—making the victory of the grave eternal loss.

MRS. SHELTON TO MRS. CLEMM

Richmond, Oct. 11th, 1849—

Oh! how shall I address you, my dear, and deeply afflicted friend under such heart-rending circumstances? I have no doubt, ere this, you have heard of the death of *our dear Edgar!* yes, he was the *dearest object* on earth to me; and, well assured am I, that he was the pride of your heart. I have not been able to get any of the particulars of his sickness & death, except an extract from the *Baltimore Sun*, which said that he died on Sunday, the 7th of this month, with congestion of the brain, after an illness of 7 days. He came up to my house on the evening of the 26th Sept. to take leave of me. He was very sad, and complained of being quite sick. I felt his pulse, and found he had considerable fever, and did not think it probable he would be able to start the next morning, (Thursday) as he anticipated. I felt so

wretched about him all of that night, that I went up early the next morning to enquire after him, when, much to my regret, he had left in the boat for Baltimore. He expected, certainly, to have been with his "dear Muddy" on the Sunday following, when he promised to write to me; and after the expiration of a week, and no letter, I became very uneasy, and continued in an agonizing state of mind, fearing he was ill, but never dreamed of his death, until it met my eye, in glancing casually over a Richmond paper of last Tuesday. Oh! my dearest friend! I cannot begin to tell you what my feelings were, as the horrible truth forced itself upon me! It was the most severe trial I have ever had; and God alone knows, how I can bear it! My heart is overwhelmed—yes, ready to burst! How can I, "dear Muddy!" speak comfort to your bleeding heart? I cannot say to you, weep not—mourn not—but I do say, *do both*, for he is worthy to be lamented. Oh! my dear Edgar! shall I never behold your dear face and hear your sweet voice, saying, "Dearest Muddy!" and "Dearest Elmira?"—How can I bear the separation? The pleasure I anticipated on his return with you, dear friend! to Richmond, was too great, ever to have been realized, and should teach me the folly of expecting bliss on earth. If it will be any consolation to you, my dear friend! to know that there is *one* who feels for you, all that human can feel, then, be assured that person is *Elmira*. Willingly would I fly to you, if I could add to your comfort, or take from your sorrows. I wrote to you a few weeks ago; I hope you received the letter. It was through the request of my dearest Eddy that I did so; and when I told him I had written to you, his joy & delight were inexpressible. I hope you will write to me as soon as possible, and let me hear from you, as I shall be anxious about you incessantly until I do; Farewell, my stricken friend! and may an All-Wise & Merciful God sustain and comfort us under this heart-breaking dispensation, is the fervent & hourly prayer of your Afflicted and sympathizing friend.—*Elmira Shelton*—

Do let me hear from you as quickly as possible—

Direct to Mrs. Elmira Shelton—

Care of A. L. Royster,
Richmond, Va.

This is the last of the papers directly bearing upon Poe's life; but some further light on his relations with Chivers as a poet is given by the correspondence of the latter with Simms, in which Chivers plainly states his own view of Poe's obligations to himself in the matter of "The Raven." The volume which Simms acknowledges and criticizes is the famous "Eonchs of Ruby,"

published in New York, with the date 1851. It appeared at the end of 1850.

SIMMS TO CHIVERS

Woodlands, S. C. April 5, 1852

THO. H. CHIVERS, M.D.

DEAR SIR. I was absent from the city when your letter was received, & many cares, some indisposition & other passing causes, have prevented me from answering till now. I have received & read your last volume, with pleasure & regret. Pleasure, because you have a rare faculty at versification. Regret because you do not do it justice—because you show too greatly how much Poe is in your mind—because you allow your fancies to run away with your muse—because you do not suffer thought to coöperate sufficiently with your faculty for rhyme—and because your rhymes are too frequently iterated, so as to become monotonous. You forget that rhyme is the mere decoration of thought, and not to be suffered to occupy its place. I shall have to say all these things in my notice of your book, and while doing justice to your real endowments, I propose to say these things with some severity. You have too much real ability to be suffered to trifle with yourself and reader; and I shall be severe, simply because I desire to be kind. I have sent you the drama & will send you some other trifles. I am also happy to enclose you the verses you desire. I shall be curious to see your play of C. Stuart & your volume of criticism. You are right to address yourself to labours of length, which may take you out of your mannerisms. Mannerism is a fatal weakness. Give up fugitive verses, which lead only to one form of egotism or another, as Poe, who wrote in jerks & spasms only, & in intervals of passion or drink, contended for fugitive performances. This was his excuse and apology only, for his own short-comings. Do not allow his errors to wreck you as they did himself. Give him up as a model and as a guide. He was a man of curious genius, wild & erratic, but his genius was rather curious than valuable—bizarre, rather than great or healthful. You see that I deal with you frankly. Do not misconceive what I say, or mistake the feeling which prompts me. I would wish to serve you to promote the exercise of your just faculties. In particular, I would keep you from sinking into this sin of mere imitation. Strike out an independent path and publish anonymously. Your previous writings would surely prejudice your new, if they could be identified, in the estimation of readers & critics. Make your book unique—seek for simplicity & wholeness—avoid yourself in your topics—write no more elegies, and discard all pet words, all phrases—discard all attempts at mysticism. Be manly, direct,

simple, natural,—full, unaffected & elaborate. Pardon me this freedom, but a genuine desire to see you successful prompts me to counsel you. I am not well—have been overtaken, —and write with a dizzy brain.

very respectfully

Yr ob. Ser^t

W. Gilmore Simms.

CHIVERS TO SIMMS

*Tontine Hotel, New Haven, Conn.,
April 10th, 1852.*

MY DEAR SIMMS, For fear that you may probably mistake the purport of my last letter—as it was written in the greatest hurry—permit me to say here that you must disabuse your mind, at once, of the ideas which you entertain of my late book—as expressed in your recent letter.

In the first place, your regrets, as therein expressed, are a “lost fear”—inasmuch as the ornaments about which you speak are the soul of the Poems. I will not stop to prove this here, but merely say you will see it done in my book of *Lectures* entitled *Hortus Deliciarum, or, the Garden of Delights*, in which I have given an analysis of Poetry from its Gothic up to its Greek manifestations. You will therein see a “*New Thing* under the Sun.”

Now permit me to say, once for all, that the Poems in that Volume are all original—my own—not only in conception but in execution. There is not a Poem in that book modeled, as you suppose, upon anything that Poe ever wrote. You, no doubt, think that you will have something to harp upon when you come to speak of *The Vigil in Aiden*; but, my dear friend, you will miss it. I am not able at present, to say *what* your talents are in the field of analysis; but I know, very well, that I am able to answer any man on this or the other side of the water, in regard to the originality of Art—and particularly of that Poem. Why, my dear Sir, I do not, like other Americans, steal the old English forms and then send my imitations forth in the world as *something* achieved. I have too much mother-wit to use this *insulting presumption*. There is not a Poem in that book that is not, *per se*, a work of Art—a work of Art not only as an Art-work, but *fortuitously* so—the Existence of it being coeternal with its Esse. This the glorious Poe saw in my first book, but he was too full of envy to express it *fully*—but *he saw it*—and I have now letters in my possession from the first American Literati, which inform me of this fact. Would to God that he were now living here on earth that he could tell it as no one else can.

The Critic *must* be an Artist—he must understand Art. Poetry cannot be criticized by a mere *ipse dixit* (*Verbum sapienti*).

I wrote you in my last that *The Vigil in Aiden* was founded upon Poe himself. But why do you think it is an “*imitation*” of *The Raven*? Because it contains the word *Lenore*? But is not Lenore common property? Mrs. Osgood, as well as the German Poet Körner, made use of it. Is it because I make use of the word *Nevermore*? Is it because it is written in the same rhythm? But all these things are *mine*. I am the Southern man who taught Mr. Poe all these things. All these things were published long before *The Raven*, from which *The Raven* was taken. All these things I will make plain to you in my answer; but do not let this deter you from speaking out—only my answer will go hard with you as a Critic.

But this is what I want to know: Do you conscientiously believe *The Raven* is to be named in the same century with *The Vigil*? Look at the Refrains—the every thing—of the two—and answer me. The “monotony” about which you talk is not in the Poem—but in you—as it is always varying to the denouement. Read it, as you ought, and you will see this.

When I show you how that truly great man, Poe, failed in *The Raven*, in attempting to do what I had already done in the Poem from which he stole, you will then admit that I really “have a happy faculty at rhyming.”

“Mysticism.” Well, this is necessary in Poetry too—as I will show you in my Lecture on Art. Now if you were as well acquainted with the Jackasses of America as I am, you would know, just as well as I do, what a hold all these new inventions of mine have taken upon them—so that they now stand committed as plagiarists of the blackest dye. I have fifty by me now. Yet, I kept locked up for seven years, and gave only a few friends my *Lost Pleiad*. Well, this is some consolation—nay, a very great joy to me—proving that *Magnus est veritas, et prevalebit*.

Never talk any more about “fugitive pieces.” I have an Epic which you will like—I think. I hope so, at least—for there is no man living whose good opinion I value more than I do yours. God bless you. *Esto perpetua*.

Thos H. Chivers.

P.S. I have received and read your Drama, and find it the best thing that I have ever seen of yours—in fact, I am now puzzled to know why you should ever have worn out your faculties in writing Novels. I will give you a *just* and a *true* review in my book—not an *ipse dixit* affair with no soul in it but *envy*—but one founded on a close insight into Art. You have shown in this Play that you are not unacquainted with the *true Dramatic Style*—but the next Play you write, meditate a Theme—have it a worthy one, which this is not—then either write a Poem *proper*, or one entirely

after the Elizabethan Gods. This you must do, or it will not live. Then, again, it is not *necessary* to the Dramatic colloquy, as you seem to suppose, that you should continually double your syllables at the end of your lines. This, it appears to me, you have studied to do, all along through your Play. It also appears to me—(judging from your work—) that you suppose—just as Byron and many others—the Dramatic composition is incompatible with the development of the highest Art. But this is not so—but diametrically opposite to the fact. The truth is, you seem to have a perfect contempt for what may be called the *Art of Composition*; but let me tell you that this is the *glory of all Poetry*. You spoke of my *Lost Pleiad* as being but a feeble exposition of my conception of Art; but you did not know, at that time, that that book was the fulfillment of that wise saying of the Latins—*Ars est celare Artem*—but Poe knew it. Lodovico Carracci could not see all the beauties of his brother Annabale's Paintings, because he was a *rival*. But it has always been my misfortune in life not to have had time to feel this passion—having had so much to think about and suffer.

It would give me great pleasure to receive any thing of yours that you may be pleased to send me. *Do not permit your mind to be abused in regard to me by some of my sap-headed enemies, who bray nonsense to the citizens of Charleston—for they do not know me.*

Yours as above, T. H. C.

An earlier letter of the same tenor was addressed to Augustine Duganne. It refers to the same book as the preceding.

CHIVERS TO DUGANNE

No. 118, Leonard Street, N. Y.,
Dec. 17th 1850.

MY DEAR SIR, I called with a friend yesterday to see you, but you were not in. I thank you for the good opinion which you entertain of my Poems. But I admire you a good deal more for the fearless manner in which you have expressed it—amid this “day of small things”—or, rather, owls of midnight darkness.

There are, however, some things in which you are mistaken. There is not a single Poem in that whole Volume imitative of either Wordsworth, Tennyson, or Poe. Wordsworth is no Poet—Tennyson is entirely devoid of passion—the *primum mobile* of the true Poet—and Poe stole every thing that is worth any thing from me. This I thought you *knew* perfectly well. If you do not know it, I can very easily make it appear.

The line to which you object and italicise in “*The Lusiad*,” is the *best* in the verse. The

Circassians never “shave” their hair. The word “*shaven*” is the most *poetical* that could have been used.

The next verse from the same Poem, is also of the same stamp. I make use of the word “so” to express how *I kissed her*. Its being used in “*Jim Crow*” has nothing at all to do with its utility.

You are also wrong about “*Threnody*.” The verse to which you object is one of the finest in the Poem. The use of the word “*Tommy*” is not bathos. This has nothing to do with bathos. It is *pathos*. It is not the *familiarity* of a word which constitutes its bathos; but its unpoetical applicability *per se*. This is *per se* a poetical word, and *so used*.

The verse which you quote from “*Evening*” is not a “gorgeous platitude,” but one of the finest in the book, precisely because no man ever wrote any thing like it. I defy you to point me out a finer verse. The due do “give God thanks by playing on the hills their pranks.”

Any man who would “slur over” any thing in my book because he supposed it was imitative of the writers named, *without* knowing it is so, is a jackass of the “first water” and as far beneath your contempt as mine. I never read any thing of Wordsworth that pleased me. Tennyson is an Epicurian Philologist. Poe stole all his “*Raven*” from me; but was the greatest Poetical Critic that ever existed. This I will prove to you, if you will call and see me.

I have the “*Epic*” of which you speak. I have also a Play, in Five Acts, which I wish to show you—besides many other precious gems.

Wishing you all happiness,

I remain yours, most truly,

Thos H. Chivers.

Augustine Duganne, Esq.

P.S. Excuse this haste—but do not fail to come and see me. You are a man after my own heart.

T. H. C.

The claim which Chivers here sets up is to an originality in metrical effects independent of Poe's example; he asserts that he practised these effects before Poe and that Poe borrowed from him, notably in “*The Raven*.” It is only too obvious that what was styled at the beginning of these articles the “*Orphic egotism*” was now fully developed in Chivers. He had, in 1849, corresponded with W. E. Channing and proclaimed himself an associationist. “I am an associationist and glory in the prosperity of the cause,” he wrote; “I believe that association is the only Ithuriel spear that can strike dead the mailed tyrants of the land.”

He was also in correspondence with Professor George Bush on the candelabrum of the Tabernacle and cognate matters, and devoted somewhat to Hebrew learning. He became, as has been said, a Swedenborgian. His poetic self-sufficiency and illusions were a part of this seething mental state. But if it be thought that his mind had lost its balance in some degree, it is only just to observe that his claim to have developed originality in metrical effects was nothing novel. The character of his reflections on meter may be illustrated by a passage from his prose.

It is the belief of many—fortunately [not] of Poets—that the School books enumerate all the rhythms in which any Poem can be written. But the truth is, by an ingenious combination, infinite numbers can be produced. The old English Poets of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, nearly all wrote in the same rhythm and metre. There is no attempt made by any of the very best Poets of that, and the subsequent Age, to produce any novel effect by combination. They disliked innovation on the old established forms—supposing, or presuming that what was done by their forefathers, was the most perfect and therefore followed directly in their footsteps. What is true of the Lyrical Poets of that day may also be said of the Dramatic writers. Nearly all the Lyric Poets wrote in the obsolescent style of the Iambic pentameter and Dimeter verses. I have long thought that I would write a paper on the various rhythms of the Æthiopians compared with those now in use of the Caucasian race—descriptive of the different idiosyncrasies of the two races—their peculiar modes of passionate expression are as essentially different in every respect, as their complexions—showing that the internal, or subjective, consciousness gives denomination to the outward, or objective expression.

The Homeric expression was spondaic—like the ponderous tread of a mighty army of Elephants—compared with that of the Æthiopian, which is generally Satyric, or lively. The English people write Hymns and funeral elegies; the Æthiopians—trochaic, Drinking-Songs giving a better knowledge of the physiology as well as psychology of the two nations than can be found either in tradition or History—in proof of which I will now proceed to give a few of the Æthiopian native Melodies. The following is what may be called a Jig which must be accompanied by a measured clapping of the thighs and alternately on each other:

“ I doane lyke de cown feeale—
I doane lyke de cotton-patch;
I like to ten de tatur-hill—

Too, Mark, a-Juba!
Juba seed de seed de breed—
I like to ten de tatur-hill—
Too, Mark, a-Juba!
Ole aunt Sary
In de dairy—
She eate de meat, she gim me de huss—
She bake de bred, she gim me de cruss—
Too, Mark, a-Juba!”

There is no such rhythm as this in the Greek Poetry—nor, in fact, in any other Nation under the sun. There is no dance in the world like that of Juba—the name of that [illegible] provoking jig which accompanies this recitative—the very climax of jocularity—being as far above the Pyrric as the Tarantula in provoking laughter accompanied by irresistible shouts of uproarious hilarity.

He maintained his originality in meter from the first; it was not an afterthought. The following letter to an editorial friend in Georgia exhibits this plainly, while it casts some side-lights on his career.

Oaky Grove, Ga., Nov. 1st, 1845

MY DEAR FRIEND, I have just received your kind and good letter, and hasten to reply to it. It gives me infinite pleasure at any time to receive a letter from you. For the friendship manifested to me in it, I will love you as long as I live. I was conscious that your delay, in not answering my letter sooner, was occasioned by some unavoidable circumstance. I am sorry that you have been ill. This you can remedy only by taking physical exercise, and living on a vegetable diet. Most of the diseases in this climate are occasioned by the use of animal food. Although Man is an omnivorous animal, in a *Southern* climate, he ought to make use of more vegetable than animal diet. The kind of exercise which I would recommend to you, is riding out in the evening, and walking about as much as possible. No man, unless he has a very strong constitution, can enjoy uninterrupted health for any length of time, who exercises his brain, as you are compelled to do, without regular exercise. The vocation of an Editor is very trying to the constitution. Very few Editors enjoy uninterrupted health—owing to this fact, that they are too much confined to one place.

I thank you for your good opinion of my book. There is not a man in the State of whose good opinion I am prouder than your own. In 1834 I wrote a Play in Five Acts, which received the commendations of the greatest men in the world, yet it has never been published up to this hour. I always felt an unutterable disgust for the miserable carplings of a certain set of biped Asses, who bray longest and loudest about that of which they know the least. This has caused me to live a

retired life for the last ten years. These miserable wretches I never met in any other State except my own—this sunny, precious land which I love better than I do any on the face of the earth. With such as these my heart was broken in the dawn of my manhood, when my aspirations after the Beautiful and the True first began to glimmer in my soul. Some of these have shrunk, in the satiety of their self-conscious ignorance, into the hopeless oblivion which their vindictive and inhuman souls have merited; while others are now preparing for the same harvest. The very thing that has sunk, and will sink, them into eternal oblivion, has inspired me with emulation. I dislike to speak of myself, but I am compelled to do so, that you may know the truth. There are many who have seen me, but very few in this State who *know me*.

The Play to which I have referred is now in the possession of Mr. Poe, one of the greatest men that ever lived. I have written four others—four Farces—thirteen Essays on different subjects—twelve Lectures on Poetry—and about fifty Tales—every single one of which has been spoken of in the highest terms. I speak of this to you that you may know with what eternal and infinite contempt I look upon those two two-legged serpents who have waylaid the path of my life to poison me with the harmless venom of their polluted lips. No wonder the North looks with such contempt upon the South, when a man cannot write a decent Editorial for a News Paper without being despised by the obstreperous cackinnations of thirty thousand Asses who can neither read nor write. Not only this, but if an individual not only for his own, but the honour of his native State, wishes to redeem her from the curse of being smothered in ignorance, he is absolutely bored to death by ignorant wretches who not only hate every thing good, but seem to think that nothing good can come out of the Nazareth in which they were born. They are so completely lost to all manly feeling and common sense that they do not even know that by so doing they disgrace nobody but themselves. Their wishing to torture others is only a living manifestation of the pangs which their own self-conscious degradation is inflicting upon themselves. There never yet lived a good and wise man who did not wish others to be good and wise. Ignorance is the mother of all the evils that infest mankind.

You say, in the conclusion of your letter, that you sympathize with me in every page of the Elegy on the death of my precious little daughter. My Dear Friend! you do not know how I respect you for your good feeling. The Poems of the Volume which I sent you, will be published in a different form in Boston with other Poems, on different subjects, added to them. They have been spoken well of by

the greatest men in the world. The Poem entitled "To Isa Singing," and "The Heavenly Vision," are both selected by Mr. Poe in his recitations, while lecturing on Poetry in the Stuyvesant Institute, New York. There have been no less than six plagiarisms and imitations of the Poem "To Allegra Florence in Heaven," which I have seen in different papers myself. Yet, there are Asses in this very County who are fools enough to persuade their pitiful souls that a man born in Wilkes cannot write Poetry. There is not in the whole Geography of the earth a more poetical clime than this. There is nothing in which I take so much pride as in never having written a single line in imitation of another. Every line is original. If you will examine my Poems, as they must be examined before they can be understood, you will perceive that they are all artistically my own. Any body of moderate ideality can write a Poem by another rhythm; but it is a task which few ever attempted to originate a style. If you will examine the subject, there is something akin in the rhythmic arrangement of the Poetry from the days of Chaucer down to the present time. In fact, there is not a single Poem, if we except my friend Tennyson's of England, of the present day, that is not modeled after the Poems of the old writers. The very rhythm of my Poems cost me years of study—and are we to believe that any sort of an Ass can understand them? I need not tell you that there is not one man in ten thousand can read a Poem correct. How pitiful then to talk of Criticism. It is shameful!

A poem, "The Lady Alice," seems to me the fairest example of the rhythm which Chivers evolved; and the patient reader who has read these relics of Chivers thus far may welcome one entire poem from his pen.

THE LADY ALICE

I

The night is serene with pleasure—
Balmy the air—
For the Moon makes the icy azure
Argently clear;
And the Stars with their music make measure
To mine down here—
My song down here—
My beautiful song down here.

2

Pale light from her orb is raining
On earth—the sea;
While I am on earth complaining
Of one to me
More fair than the Moon now waning—
More pure than she—
More fair than she—
More womanly pure than she.

3

She lives in her golden palace
Beside the sea;
And her name is the Lady Alice—
So dear to me!
And she drinks from her crystal Chalice
Sweet wine so free—
White wine so free—
Because her pure heart is free.

4

She sings while the Angels listen
With pure delight!
And the Stars with new glory glisten,
And laughter bright;
While my heart in its narrow prison
Doth pine to-night—
Pine all the night—
For want of my Moon to-night.

5

She smiles while my soul is sorry
With love divine;
And the Stars hear in Heaven the story
Which makes me pine!
I would give all their crowns of glory
If she were mine—
Were only mine—
Were only forever mine.

6

Oh! come from thy golden palace,
Sweet Lady bright!
And fill up this empty Chalice
With wine to-night!—
I drink to my Lady Alice!
My soul's delight—
Heart—soul's delight—
My ever divine delight!

The likeness to Poe is unmistakable; but in the poem as a whole there is to my ear a Celtic quality in the refrain which Poe never naturalized in his own verse. It may be allowed that, though overlaid with Poe's peculiar myth-names and vocal mystery, Chivers's verse had a music of its own. From the start he had sought the melodic effects of the refrain more markedly than Poe himself, and he had been bred on Coleridge and Shelley, the lyrical masters of sound. He was in parallelism with Poe, so to speak, and was attracted to him till he coalesced. It is no wonder that he himself sincerely regarded his work as the primary one, and Poe's as the derivative, given his egotism. The claim he made in regard to "The Raven" can be defined

precisely. He had employed an iambic meter with three feminine rhymes for elegiac verse in the poem "To Allegra Florence in Heaven," and he had developed the idea of the return of the dead woman's soul to her lover in "Uranothern"—a title certainly pre-Poesque. If one chooses the marvelous lines from the first of these to illustrate the kind of meter, it is easy to give the impression of a *reductio ad absurdum*. No account of Chivers would be complete without them.

As an egg when broken, never can be mended,
but must ever
Be the same crushed egg forever, so shall
this dark heart of mine
Which, though broken, still is breaking, and
shall nevermore cease aching,
For the sleep which has no waking—for
the sleep that now is thine!

But the absurdity of the substance is not one of the arguments, after all, and the rest of the poem is not like this.

It is not too much to grant that in the many atmospheric influences that surrounded the germination of "The Raven" (and their number was a multitude) these two poems, familiar to Poe, and certainly the last of them, "Uranothern," had a place. The two poets were extraordinarily sympathetic, but what was intense and firm in Poe was diffused and liquescent in Chivers, who was in truth a kind of double to him in what seems sometimes a spiritualistic, sometimes a grotesque way. He was, indeed, to Poe not unlike what Alcott was to Emerson, and the comparison helps to clarify the confusion of their mutual relations, while it maintains Poe's mastery unimpaired. Chivers continued to publish new volumes, and reissue the old, until he died in Georgia in 1858.

Unfortunately, in attempting to reconstruct the image of Chivers it is impossible to escape that burlesque effect, though with the kindest intention in the world, which has proved the most enduring element in his works. He did not really change and lose his balance of mind in poetic egotism; the lack of balance was always there, and only declared itself more spectacularly as time went on. The tumultuous vacuity of Blake is found in him from the start and at the finish; it took the form of senseless sonority of diction and mindless rhyme-echo at the end, instead of visible chaotic

things of line and color. But at the beginning there was the germ. Here is a stanza from one of his early pieces, entitled "To a China Tree."

How gladly I looked through the suckle-gemmed valley,
 The grove where the washwoman filled up her tank—
 And stood by the well, in the green oakey alley,
 And turned down the old cedar bucket and drank.
 But farewell, ye oaks! and the trees of my childhood!
 And all the bright scenes appertaining to joy!
 I think of ye often, away in this wildwood,
 But never shall be as I was when a boy.
 Nor shoot with my cross-bow—my mulberry cross-bow—
 The robins that perched on the boughs near the gate.

This is something that neither Moore, nor Coleridge, nor even Woodworth, would have been capable of; but in it are the imitative catch, the liking for the refrain, the unconscious dips into bathos, that appear also in the later verses. Many poets have felt that Poe escapes these things only by a hair's-breadth, though his material is finer. The difference was that Poe was a genius, while Chivers only thought he was one. Poe, I think, played with Chivers to make something out of him; but there was nothing to be made of him but a friend, and that was not Poe's game. Apart from Poe, Chivers was an interesting illustration of his times: the vast, unfathomable ocean of American crudity was in Chivers, Alcott, Whitman, Mark Twain—these four. He was, without regard to his poetry, a most estimable man in his intellectual sympathy, his ideals and labors, and kindly and honorable in all his relations with his fellows.



THE SIXTH DAY

BY EDITH DE BLOIS LASKEY

THE worlds had lain in an age-long dream while steadily to and fro,
 With a force repressed till it seemed like rest, the powers were heaving slow;

And the sentient, fluttering life of things, like a spark when the currents meet,
 Had sprung, youth-strong, from the travail long, and creation seemed complete.

But a nameless want that was past endure, shadow-like, darkened all,
 And the horror tense of a keen suspense held the pulse of the whole in thrall,

And Nature bloomed like a summer bride in the joy of her new-won grace,
 But great, dumb fear of a wonder near swept the beauty from her face.

Lo, still! The hush of a million worlds was piercing as a flame,
 The life-wide breath was clutched, like death, and then the moment came.

(O lips infirm that strive to speak what never a mortal can!)
 The eternal Now touched a shaggy brow, and the beast looked up—a Man!